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ABSTRACT

To investigate self-concept, 50 learning disabled adolescents from a regular high school who were receiving resource room assistance were given the Situation Specific Subject Competence Test for self-concept. Their scores were compared with 50 learning disabled adolescents from a self-contained program. The adolescents from the self-contained program scored identically to the mainstreamed adolescents on self-concept for math, English, and physical education. The results indicated that students segregated in special self-contained programs are more similar to students in the resource programs than orginally expected. The results also implied that specific self-concepts in specific subjects are more valuable to the classroom teacher than the general nonspecific self-concept. Implications were drawn from the findings for theories on self-concept and learning disabilities and for future research. (CL)

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The Self-Concept of the Learning Disabled Adolescent Mainstreamed versus Self-Contained Program

by

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ABSTRACT

The affective characteristics of the learning disabled adolescent are a major concern of educators when attempting to program scholastically. Knowing how the learning disabled adolescent reports his self-concept while in a regular high school with resource room intervention, and in a self-contained program away from a regular high school, will help with future mainstreaming decisions. To investigate this affective characteristic, 50 learning disabled adolescents from a regular high school who were receiving resource room assistance were given the Situation Specific Subject Competence for self-concept. Their scores were compared with 50 learning disabled adolescents from a self-contained program. The adolescents from the self-contained program scored identically to the mainstreamed adolescents on self-concept for math, English and physical education. The results indicate that those students segregated in special self-contained programs are more similar to students in the resource programs than originally expected. The results also imply that specific self-concepts in specific subjects are more valuable to the classroom teacher than the general nonspecific self-concept.

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INTRODUCTION

Educators have long recognized that learning disabilities are associated with other affective deficiencies. The inability of learning disabled students to keep up with their peers academically is linked with other behavioral or psychological disorders (Bryan 1977).

The adolescent learning disabled student often encounters extreme difficulties in his attempts to learn. Teachers often label the adolescent as being "emotionally disturbed" while earlier as an elementary student he was labeled "learning problem" (Koppitz 1977). This differentiation in classification would require a different interpretation by the school as to the nature of the problem. A student with a "learning problem" would require remediation in academics, while an adolescent labelled "emotionally disturbed" would require treatment not available in a regular high school. There is an indication that these adolescents eventually drop out of school or are suspended for their emotional difficulty. Of those students who drop out of high school 50% do so for school-related reasons (Watson 1975).

The self-concept is the filtering system or screen through which everything else is seen, heard, evaluated and understood (Shelton 1977). The self-concept of the

learning disabled student would suffer because of the rejection he faces from his peers and teachers (Bryan 1977).

A learning disability refers to a specific disorder in one or more of the processes of speech, language, perception, behavior, reading, spelling, writing or math (Calhouln 1975). The learning disabled student has a weaker more negative self-concept than his more normal peers (Purkey 1978). This negative self-concept is said to be attributed to his continual failure in the educational system and the contributing negative consequences of the same.

In a study of learning disabled children in grades 3-6, Boersma and Chapman (1979) after administering a test of self-concept while the learning disabled students were in their regular classes concluded that the learning disabled subjects had a lower self-concept score than the control subjects. Barger (1978) reported in a study comparing learning disabled students in a self-contained classroom with learning disabled students from resource room programs that there were no differences in the self-concepts of the two groups. However Smith (1977) demonstrated that students calculate their self-concept based on their comparison with the others in their reference group. This comparison is to occur only if the comparison

group or other individual is similar to the individual in a particular attribute or ability (Smith 1977).

There is little empirical evidence comparing the self-concepts of the learning disabled adolescents in the self-contained and resource room programs. Opie (1975) used an interview method to compare the self-concepts of boys with average and low average intelligence scores. She concluded that there was no difference between the two in relation to reported self-concept.

Svec (1982) used the Piers Harris Test of Self-Concept to compare the general self-concepts of learning disabled adolescents in resource and self-contained programs. The results indicate that when the two samples are compared on general self-concept the students in the resource room program score higher on self-concept than those of the self-contained program.

Specific Self-Concept

Boeresma and Chapman (1979), presented the Student's Perception of Ability Scale (SPAS) as a method of measuring the self-concepts of elementary learning disabled children. This test, broke up the self-concept into a self-concept of arithmetic, school satisfaction, perception of reading and spelling.

Svec (1983) used the Situation Specific Subject Competence Test, (SSSCT), to measure self-concept in Math,

English and Physical Education. This test was designed for the high school student with average intelligence. The author used this test to compare the self-concepts of dropout and regular attending males in math, English and physical education. The results indicated that males, regardless of dropout and nondropout status, reported different self-concepts in each of the three different environments. Physical education self-concept was followed by Math and English in relation to student preference.

The literature presented indicates that the self-concept of the learning disabled adolescent in the resource room program will be better than the self-concept of the learning disabled adolescent in the self-contained program. The research also implies that the learning disabled adolescent will score differently in self-concept in the three different environments, of math, English and physical education.

Learning Disabilities

Ysseldyke and Algozzine (1983) report that the learning disabled term has been used by educators to create a subgroup of students who are failing. Despite the efforts of school authorities to develop clear cut criteria for selection into learning disabled programs;

"....learning disabilities has become (and always has been) a category for treatment of low achievement."

The authors conclude that the original notion of "process" disorders underlying learning disabilities is unproductive as a model, and that educators should recognize low achievement as the problem.

This recent literature, implies that the definitional terms for learning disability, are difficult to establish and that students with academic difficulties in school may be considered under this definition. For the purpose of this study, learning disabled adolescents are those who are separated from the regular classroom routine for resource room assistance or for programming in a self-contained program.

METHOD

Subjects

There were two groups of subjects (Ss) for this study. Group one consisted of 50 students from the learning disabled resource program of the four selected high schools. These students were placed in the 1-2 period per day resource class through a central review committee (IPRC). Criteria for selection were pre-selected, the main consideration being average or better than average intelligence with a specific learning disability in one or more of the selected areas. The teachers indicated that the selection process is decided to a great extent by the personality of the teachers. Further investigation indicated that there was no clear definite criteria for entry into these programs. Students would be placed due to learning or behavior problems.

Group two consisted of 50 students from three different self-contained programs. Students were placed in these programs through an internal program review committee or specific school team.

Instruments

The Situation Specific Subject Competence Test (Appendix 1) was used to test for specific self-concept.

The test is said to correlate positively with achievement and differentiate between different academic environments (Svec 1983). The test measures self-concept in each of Math, English and Physical Education. The test takes 10 minutes to complete and instructions are at approximately the grade 3 reading level.

Procedure

A research assistant was used to administer the SSSCT in the self-contained program, and all but two of the resource room programs. In these two classes the teachers asked to administer the test to avoid a disruption of the usual classroom routine.

Ss in the resource room program were given the test while in their special program. The research assistant handed out the tests and was available for questions concerning word pronunciation and meanings.

Ss in the self-contained program were given the tests while in their special environment. The research assistant administered the tests and was available for student questions concerning word meanings and pronunciation.

Design

Measures were taken of the Ss age, sex, and reported self-concept in math, English and physical education. The statistical design for analyzing the ages, and sex

differences in self-concept scores, was a single factor analysis of variance. The statistical design for analyzing self-concept in different subjects through a repeated measures analysis of variance is illustrated in Figure 1. For the analysis there is one "between subjects" factor, A (groups), and three "within subjects" factors, B (subjects).

Fifty Ss were included in each treatment group.

FIGURE 1

REPEATED MEASURES DESIGN FOR THE ANALYSIS OF SELF-CONCEPT

Self-Concept

		Subject		
		B_1	B_2	B_3
A_1	S 1			
	S 50			
A_2	S 1			
	S 50			

Key to Abbreviations

A_1 -- Normal Subjects

A_2 -- Dropout Subjects

S -- Subject

B_1 -- English

B_2 -- Math

B_3 -- Physical Education

RESULTS

Age and Sex Differences All of the Ss in the resource room program were males, while there were 20 females and 30 males in the self-contained program. A single factor analysis of variance was used to test for a significant difference in a) ages of the 2 groups (self-contained Vs resource room program) and b) the self-concepts in math, English and physical education of the 30 males and 20 females of the self-contained program. The ages of the two groups were similar ($p > .05$) and there was no significant difference in the math, English and physical education self-concepts of the males and females of the self-contained program ($p > .05$). Table 1 presents the mean ages for the two groups.

Self-Concept

The self-concept of the resource and self-contained groups was analyzed through a 2 x 3 fixed ANOVA design with repeated measures. The effects of group classification and academic environment were assessed. Table 2 presents the summary of this analysis. This analysis indicates that the self-concepts of the learning disabled adolescent is similar in both the resource and self-contained program ($p > .05$).

TABLE 1

AGES OF THE TWO GROUPS

(N=50 per Group)

	Resource Program	Self-Contained Program
Mean	16.47	16.28
SD	1.44	1.24

TABLE 2

SUMMARY OF ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE
OF SELF-CONCEPT FOR
GROUPS AND ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENTS

Source	df	MS	F
Between Ss	99		
Groups (A)	1	28.83	.56
Subjects within groups	98	47.46	
Within Ss	200		
Academic Environment (B)	2	39.13	4.013*
A x B	2	1.47	.15
B x Subjects with groups	196	9.75	

* $p < .05$

Ss did report different self-concepts in the different academic environments of math, English and physical education ($p < .05$). Physical education was the most favourable of the three self-concepts followed by math and English, regardless of group status.

DISCUSSION

The self-concepts of the learning disabled adolescent in the resource room program has been reported to be similar to that of the learning disabled adolescent in the self-contained program (Barger 1978). The results of the present study support this finding. As Smith (1977) demonstrated, the self-concept of an individual may depend on his immediate reference group. This factor was eliminated in the present study by using the SSSCT where the reference group and environments was defined.

When the means are compared to those of regular attending students from the SVEC (1983) study, the self-concepts of the regular attending students is better for the two environments of physical education and math. There was no difference between the self-concepts of the two groups in English. This result implies a difference in the self-concept reporting patterns of regular attending students and learning disabled adolescents.

Students from both groups reported different levels of self-concept in each of the three subject areas. Physical education was the most favourable followed by math and English. This result supports the previous findings of Boeresma and Chapman (1979) and Svec (1983).

The result of the analysis of ages indicates the homogeneous nature of the two groups. The result of the data related to the sex of the Ss indicates that females are more like male learning disabled adolescents than originally expected. As a result of this finding, a survey was made of the number of females who went before the I.P.R.C. committee for special placement, and the number accepted. This percentage would be then compared to the male total to try to shed some insight into the reason for the over representation of males in the resource programs. The results indicated that from April to June of that year, 34 females were presented for special placement of which 30 or 88% were declared exceptional, while during that same period 117 males were considered for special placement and 83% declared exceptional. Clearly this result indicates that girls who are presented to the special I.P.R.C. committees are declared exceptional at the same rate as the males. The question arises that although there were no girls in the sample of the learning resource programs (S.L.D.) for this study, 20 or 40% of those in the self-contained program were female. It may be that the different criteria for selection into the programs may account for this discrepancy.

Implications

The results of the present study present implications toward theories about self-concept, learning disabilities and self-concept.

Self-Concept

The results of the present study indicate support for a situation specific self-concept and not a general or overall self-concept. This result implies that self-concept is directly related to the specific environment and that remediation should be based on those specific environments. As Carlton (1981) reports the efforts to improve general self-concept through various programs has failed. The present study suggests that programs designed to improve specific self-concepts may be more effective.

Learning Disabilities

The results of the present study reveals the homogeneous nature of the two different experimental groups. One group, the resource students, who were specifically labelled as learning disabled by a central I.P.R.C. committee were similar to the self-contained group on self-concept measures and age. This finding lends support to Yesseldyke's (1983) findings that report that more general definitions are applicable when discussing learning

disabled students, and that we should look at those who are not functioning instead of specific process definitions.

The absence of females in the resource program indicates that the females of this population are not being considered for this special program. The results of the present study indicates that identification procedures may need to be altered to help meet the needs of the females who could benefit from such a program.

Implications for Research

The results of this study suggests that future research is needed to:

1) Determine the relationship between situation specific subject competence and actual achievement, in math, English and physical education for the learning disabled students;

2) Indicate the effects of specific programs designed to improve specific self-concepts in the learning disabled population;

3) Determine the similarities and differences in the self-concept reporting patterns of learning disabled and dropout students;

4) Develop early identification procedures for females of the general population who may be in need of resource assistance;

5) Conduct longitudinal studies to follow the students labelled as learning disabled to determine their success and failures in regular and special programs.

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APPENDIX A

THE SITUATION SPECIFIC SUBJECT COMPETENCE TEST ‹SSSCT›

NAME: _____

D.O.B.: _____

GRADE: _____

SEX: _____

DATE: _____

SCHOOL: _____

SCORES

ENGLISH SSSCT: _____

MATH SSSCT: _____

P. E. SSSCT: _____

TOTAL: _____

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PLEASE BE SURE TO READ INSTRUCTIONS **BEFORE** ANSWERING

Answer the following questions as if you were in an ENGLISH class with 35 other students. **Circle** the answer which **best** describes how you will behave in each situation. **Remember** you are in an **ENGLISH CLASS.**

1. When the **ENGLISH** teacher asks you a question will you have the wrong answer?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

2. In **ENGLISH** when the total grade is based mainly on **one** examination, will you do better than other people?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

3. You have studied for an **ENGLISH** exam. Will you pass?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

4. In an **ENGLISH** course where you have been doing poorly, will the fear of a bad grade cut down your success?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

5. The **ENGLISH** teacher gives you the option to work alone or with five other students. Will you work alone?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

6. Will you work more effectively under pressure as when an **ENGLISH** test is very important?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

7. A few of your classmates **(from your ENGLISH class)** are getting together for a party after school. Will they ask you to join?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

8. Will nervousness while taking an **ENGLISH** examination or test stop you from doing well?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

9. The **ENGLISH** teacher asks for volunteers for a special project. Will you volunteer?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

10. The **ENGLISH** teacher asks for volunteers to give a short report to the class. Will you do it?
    (a) always (b) often
    (c) rarely (d) never

PLEASE BE SURE TO READ INSTRUCTIONS **BEFORE** ANSWERING

Answer the following questions as if you were in a MATH class with 35 other students. **Circle** the answer which **best** describes how you will behave in each situation. **Remember** you are in a **MATH CLASS**.

1. The **MATH** teacher asks for volunteers to give a short report to the class. Will you do it?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

2. Will nervousness while taking a **MATH** examination or test stop you from doing well?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

3. The **MATH** teacher asks for volunteers for a special project. Will you volunteer?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

4. A few of your classmates **(from your MATH class)** are getting together for a party after school. Will they ask you to join?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

5. Will you work more effectively under pressure as when a **MATH** test is very important?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

6. When the **MATH** teacher asks you a question will you have the wrong answer?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

7. In **MATH** when the total grade is based mainly on **one** examination, will you do better than other people?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

8. You have studied for a **MATH** exam. Will you pass?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

9. In a **MATH** course where you have been doing poorly, will the fear of a bad grade cut down your success?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

10. The **MATH** teacher gives you the option to work alone or with five other students. Will you work alone?
    (a) always (b) often
    (c) rarely (d) never

PLEASE BE SURE TO READ INSTRUCTIONS **BEFORE** ANSWERING

Answer the following questions as if you were in a PHYSICAL EDUCATION class with 35 other students. **Circle** the answer which **best** describes how you will behave in each situation. **Remember** you are in a **PHYSICAL EDUCATION CLASS.**

1. The **PHYSICAL EDUCATION** teacher gives you the option to work alone or with five other students. Will you work alone?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

2. In a **PHYSICAL EDUCATION** course where you have been doing poorly, will the fear of a bad grade cut down your success?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

3. You have studied for a **PHYSICAL EDUCATION** exam. Will you pass?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

4. In **PHYSICAL EDUCATION** when the total grade is based mainly on **one** examination, will you do better than other people?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

5. When the **PHYSICAL EDUCATION** teacher asks you a question will you have the wrong answer?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

6. Will you work more effectively under pressure as when a **PHYSICAL EDUCATION** test is very important?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

7. A few of your classmates **(from your PHYSICAL EDUCATION class)** are getting tgether for a party after school. Will they ask you to join?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

8. The **PHYSICAL EDUCATION** teacher asks for volunteers for a special project. Will you volunteer?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

9. Will nervousness while taking a **PHYSICAL EDUCATION** examination or test stop you from doing well?
   (a) always (b) often
   (c) rarely (d) never

10. The **PHYSICAL EDUCATION** teacher asks for volunteers to give a short report to the class. Will you do it?
    (a) always (b) often
    (c) rarely (d) never